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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3805

INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE

RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 2487

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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001101

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

AF/S FOR B. WALCH

DRL FOR N. WILETT

ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS

STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL ASEC PHUM ZI

SUBJECT: DIRTY POLITICS AT WORK IN TOWN THAT VOTED MDC

SUMMARY

11. (SBU) The mayor of Ruwa, Pinias Mushayavanhu, and members of his town council met with us on December 5 to discuss living conditions in Ruwa, a town of 100,000 people located about 12 miles east of Harare. The mayor and his staff are all members of the opposition MDC and displaced the incumbent ZANU-PF administration in the March 2008 elections. Since that election, the town has been deprived of virtually all federal government support. This has contributed to the rapid deterioration of water delivery, education, and health services in Ruwa. The extent of the degradation of these basic needs was made clear during site visits at the town's water facilities, a primary school, the local clinic, and the maintenance workshop. Ruwa is a snapshot of what is occurring throughout Zimbabwe. END SUMMARY.

100,000 People Using a Single Borehole

12. (SBU) Ruwa's citizens are now relying on a single borehole located on the eastern side of the town. As we arrived there was a line of several dozen locals waiting to fill containers to bring back to their homes. The town engineer explained that they have not received Harare municipal water for seven months, and the only other borehole had broken down. This meant that anyone living on the western side of town would have to carry jugs of water for several miles. The engineer told us that if the borehole broke down or dried up, the council would not be able to afford repairs or the costs to drill a new borehole. After pondering that possibility, the engineer said, "I don't know what we would do."

Raw Sewage Shuts Down Primary School

13. (SBU) We also visited one of Ruwa's two primary schools. The school consists of a handful of single story buildings that appeared to be in reasonably good shape. However, the school had been closed because an underground sewage pipe burst, leading to a large pool of standing waste. A stream of sewage was also steadily flowing downhill across the lawn that separated the buildings. The engineer explained that this was the same water we had seen earlier being collected from the borehole, after it had been used to flush toilets. Once the pipe burst, school officials and parents closed the school out of concern children would be exposed to cholera.

The Clinic Stands Empty

14. (SBU) A visit of the Ruwa town clinic revealed a well-built building consisting of a dozen rooms designed to provide medical services including basic surgical operations, maternity care, and disease treatment and prevention. The clinic was a council-funded project begun about ten years ago, but while the construction had been completed, it was essentially providing no medical services to the population. There was only a single nurse working at the clinic, as the second nurse had quit earlier in the year. The nurse explained that there were no patients being treated because they had no drugs to offer and no doctors on staff. She showed us the pharmacy which only had a few boxes of medical supplies such as gauze and tape. The refrigerator held some

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childhood inoculations, but they were ruined because they had not been kept cool due to electricity outages. The maternity ward did not even have a tape measure to measure newborn infants. Poloff asked where Ruwa's cholera victims were getting treatment, and the nurse replied that they were dying in their homes. She told us that on the day we visited a two-year old had died of cholera.

Garbage Piles Up

15. (SBU) The Ruwa town maintenance yard houses the facilities that maintain the town's vehicles, including the only garbage truck. The truck was no longer in operation because the hydraulic pump that raises and lowers the garbage bin and compressor had broken. The engineer received an estimate of US\$5,000 to repair it, but the council did not have the funds. Consequently, there is no garbage pick-up in Ruwa, and waste is being dumped illegally or being burned. Ironically, council members shared that the only garbage trucks that drive Ruwa's streets are those city trucks that are directed to dump garbage at the houses of MDC officials.

COMMENT

16. (SBU) Ruwa is not unique in today's Zimbabwe, though it bears a double burden for having voted for the opposition. The town still has a workable infrastructure that has broken down because of lack of investment. While unpaid, the officials we met with were wholly dedicated. Their greatest frustration was that they couldn't deliver to Ruwa's citizens that which they had been voted in to office to accomplish.
END COMMENT.

DHANANI